THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA KRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Minister of Trade of WTO member countries took an overview of the activities of the WTO, with discussions centering around the two major issues of implementation of WTO Agreements and future activities of the WTO. A proposal for commencing a work programme on Electronic Commerce was also on the agenda.

(c) and (d) Shortcomings of the Urguay Round Agreements and problems in their implementation have been highlighted, as also the need to address these issues in a fair and objective manner, through negotiations, in a spirit of mutual understanding. The Ministerial Conference has taken cognizance of these issues raised by India and other developing countries, by recognising the need to "further pursue....Evaluation of the implementation of individual Agreements and the realisation of their objectives" and that such evaluation would cover, *inter-alia*, the problems encountered in implementation and the consequent impact on the trade and development of Member countries of the WTO.

(e) Deliberations on the different provisions of the entire set of Agreements negotiated at the culmination of the Urguay Round, which led to establishment of the WTO in 1995, is an ongoing process in the WTO. Before the Geneva Ministerial Conference, the issues were studied in depth by the Ministry in consultation with other Ministeries, trade and industry. A group of Ministers was also constituted to study the issues coming up before the Ministerial Conference and to devise a strategy. India also co-ordinated action with other developing countries before the meeting.

**Sharp Fall in Exports to East Asia**

2769. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a sharp seventeen per cent fall in exports to East Asia in 1997-98 and imports rose by fifteen per cent during the same period; and

(b) if so, the strategy being worked out to reverse this situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA KRISHNA HEGDE): (a) India's exports to East Asian countries declined by about 14% during the year 1997-98 whereas the imports from the region registered a growth of about 15% in US $ terms.

(b) To sustain the momentum of India's trade with East Asian countries, the Government of India has offered a package of measures to the ASEAN countries experiencing financial and currency turmoil. These include: (i) provision of government to government credit to enable ASEAN countries to source their requirements of capital goods, equipments, raw materials, consumer durables and consultancy from India, (ii) provision of Indian EXIM Bank credit for financing India-ASEAN trade, (iii) facilitation of counter trade arrangements for bulk commodities and goods, (iv) continuance of guarantees and counter-guarantees for trade with respect to ASEAN countries; (v) Indian EXIM Bank's Overseas Investment Finance Programme to support Indian Investments in ASEAN countries, (vi) 'Asian Countries Investment Partner Programme' of the EXIM Bank for supporting Indian Joint Venture partners for ASEAN investments in India, and (vii) EXIM Bank's Project preparatory Services Programme' to be utilised for preparing the ground for ASEAN-India infrastructure projects.